

LCQ8: Development of tourism projects with local characteristics

Following is a question by the Hon Yiu Si-wing and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Gregory So, in the Legislative Council today (June 14):

Question:

The Financial Secretary mentioned in this year's Budget Speech that the Government would invite the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) to provide funding support to activity organisers and the tourism sector planning to launch tourism projects with local characteristics, with a view to encouraging the development of a greater variety of tourism products to attract more visitors to Hong Kong. On the other hand, HKTB launched a tourism project named "Old Town Central" in April this year, which repackages the local characteristics of Central such as its heritage buildings and landmarks, arts and culture, as well as dining and entertainment elements into tourist walking routes. HKTB also plans to extend this type of tourism project to other districts with distinct characteristics. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the procedure for activity organisers and the tourism sector to apply to HKTB for funding support for the launch of tourism projects with local characteristics, and the expected maximum amount of subsidy that may be granted to each application;

(2) whether it knows the districts in which HKTB plans to launch, in the coming three years, tourism projects similar to the Old Town Central project, as well as the relevant timetable and estimated expenditure;

(3) apart from providing the funding support mentioned in (1), of the measures to be introduced by the authorities in the coming three years to support the tourism sector to develop a greater variety of tourism products; and

(4) given that some members of the tourism industry have pointed out that one of the hurdles for developing tourism projects with local characteristics is the lack of practitioners in the industry (particularly tourist guides) who have a deep understanding of local history, culture, historic monuments, etc., whether the

authorities will provide relevant training for tourism industry practitioners so that they can promote local culture and characteristics to tourists in a more professional manner; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In planning for tourism development, one of the Government's focuses is to drive product diversification by showcasing the uniqueness of Hong Kong. In this connection, the Government supported the tourism industry by allocating additional funding in the 2017-18 Budget to roll out various measures to encourage the trade to develop diversified tourism products with a view to enhancing the attractiveness of Hong Kong.

A consolidated reply to the questions raised by Hon Yiu Si-wing is as follows:

(1) In 2017-18, the Government will provide funding of \$12 million for the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) to launch a pilot scheme to support tourism activities showcasing Hong Kong's local characteristics. The pilot scheme aims at providing funding support to organisers for hosting activities with local characteristics and tourism appeal, including the undertaking of relevant marketing promotion. The HKTB is working out the funding criteria and guidelines for the pilot scheme and will announce the details in due course.

(2) Promotion efforts on "Old Town Central" will be running on an on-going basis and new elements will be brought in from time to time. At this stage, subject to the effectiveness of the campaign after implementation, consideration will be given as to whether and how to extend this idea to promote other districts in Hong Kong.

(3) In addition to the pilot scheme to support tourism activities showcasing Hong Kong's local characteristics, in 2017-18, the Government will provide additional funding for the HKTB to launch various subsidy programmes for the travel trade, including a pilot scheme to promote in-depth green tourism, the Hong Kong Stopover Programme, to support trade partners in developing land excursion products for cruise passengers, etc.

Moreover, in order to enrich visitors' experience, the HKTB has launched the

New Tour Product Development Scheme since 2012-13. The scheme aims at encouraging the travel trade to develop new themed and creative tour products through subsidising the marketing of these tour products. By December 2016, the Scheme had subsidised 33 tour products.

(4) The Government will allocate \$5 million in 2017-18 to subsidise, through the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (TIC), the training of tourism industry members (including staff of travel agents, tourist guides and tour escorts) for enhancing the service quality of the industry. The scope of funding will cover the training for tourism industry members relating to local cultural and other distinctively themed tourism. The TIC is formulating the details of the initiative (including the eligibility for application, detailed scope of the funding, etc.). Details will be announced in due course.

In addition, to enhance the skills competency of the tourism industry members, the Employees Retraining Board (ERB) provides skills training courses under the tourism industry category of its "Skills Upgrading Scheme Plus". There are a total of 650 training places for these courses in 2017-18. Training bodies may apply for training places from ERB on various tourism related topics, such as cultural, historic and heritage tourism, with regard to market demand and enrolment of individual courses.

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